

BURNS COMMON INJURY

Although considerable medical progress has been made in the treatment of serious burns, these injuries frequently become infected, sometimes leave permanent damage, are often fatal, and are doubly frustrating to patient and doctor alike because they are almost always preventable.

Burns are an appallingly common injury. Thousands of minor burns are never reported, but there is a record of 929,000 burns having been reported in this country in a single year — 1959. Young people under the age of 10 and older people past the age of 50 tolerate burns very poorly. In the 1959 record of 929,000 burns having died; of these, 3,300 were children.

Every adult should follow a strict regimen of caution and common sense in protecting himself and his family from the hazards of burns. This includes:

- Keep children away from matches, cooking utensils on the stove, and hot liquids.
- Do not leave children alone in the house or unattended in the bath tub.
- Keep clothing (especially cotton) well out of the way of stove, matches, electric or gas heaters.
- Don't smoke in bed (or anywhere else where you are likely to fall asleep) nor when your gas tank is being filled or you are checking the gas burner on your cook stove.
- Don't light fires with gasoline.

There are three types of burns: **first degree**, which results in the reddened skin you get when you are sunburned; **second degree**, in which blisters develop; and **third degree**, in which the full thickness of the skin is destroyed.

Needless to say, the most serious of these burns is a third degree. How serious it is depends on how much of the body is involved. If the area of skin destroyed is larger than a fifty-cent piece, some kind of skin graft is usually required. If less than 10 per cent of the body surface is involved the injury, though serious, is not usually fatal. On the other hand, if 40 per cent or more of the body surface is involved, the victim frequently does not survive.

When a doctor treats someone with a severe burn, he first tries to combat the shock and then to curb infection. The body reacts to

severe injuries such as a burn by drawing salt solution out of the circulatory blood. In addition, blood in the burned area or adjacent to it may be destroyed. This depletion produces a state of shock. To offset it, salt solution and blood are replaced through the veins. As soon as the patient has recovered from his initial nausea, which usually lasts six to eight hours, he is given salt solution by mouth.

A first-aid measure which might well be kept in mind if you find that you have to care for someone who has suffered a major burn under circumstances in which medical care is not immediately available, feed the patient a solution in which one level teaspoon of table salt and one-half teaspoon of baking soda have been added to a quart of water. An adult weighing 160 - 180 pounds can be given as much as three or four quarts of this mixture in 24 hours.

To combat infection, some doctors apply sterile dressings over a single layer of vaseline gauze. Others prefer a newer method of leaving the wound open, without either dressing or medication, and letting the burn dry out until a hard crust forms over the destroyed skin. In spite of the preventative efforts of doctors in this respect, infections continue to be a serious problem in connection with severe burns, and the use of antibiotics seems to be of little help. Antibiotics, however, are essential when an infection has developed and invaded the blood stream.

Are there home remedies for burns? Yes, for minor ones. Sunburn can be treated with ointments which relieve the discomfort. Simple, small second degree burns in which blisters have formed can be treated by gently washing the area with soap and water and then applying a plain, dry sterile dressing. This should be left undisturbed for three to five days. **Never open the blisters** — not even with a so-called "sterilized" needle.

If the burn is extensive, do nothing except to call your doctor at once and get the patient to the hospital, as per his instructions. No matter how tempted you may be to apply ointment or otherwise try to relieve pain, remember that home remedies for serious burns may interfere with the treatment your doctor has in mind.

L.A. Library Has Steady Growth Rate

Use of Los Angeles County Public Library services continues to grow at a substantial rate, according to County Librarian William S. Geller, who pointed out that the October circulation of 882,247 represented a gain of slightly more than 10 per cent over October of 1962.

With the October circulation showing a net increase of 80,911 over the same month a year ago, total circulation for the first four months of the current fiscal year, 3,144,287, is a gain of 275,540 over the same four month period of 1962.

"Our circulation increase is significantly larger than was projected originally and this is causing budgetary difficulties; however, the circulation increase is gratifying because it indicates that the public is responding strongly to the services of the Los Angeles County

Public Library system," Geller said.

Although there were gains in each category of reading, contrary to the usual trend the largest single use of library books was in the field of children's fiction, with 239,191 volumes being borrowed. Second category was adult non-fiction with 231,396 books being checked out.

The County Librarian pointed out that the circulation is achieved through a total of 117 outlets of which 90 are libraries in local communities, eight are mobile libraries and the balance are branches in major county institutions.

"The emphasis in our service to patients and inmates in county institutions is on 'self help' and rehabilitation literature," the County Librarian continued.

He pointed out that all circulation projections indicate a total of more than 10 million by the close of the current fiscal year unless there is a drastic change in the current pattern.

The County Librarian emphasized the circulation figures were only a small part of the story of public use of County Library facilities.

"These figures, important as they are, do not show the thousands of hours spent by school children doing research for their home work nor do they show the time spent by library staff in assisting patrons with reference material, with filling out request forms for books not in the local library, and in obtaining back issues of magazines for research," Geller continued.

He pointed out that in October the library staff answered 107,838 reference questions for patrons of which 18,310 required more than five minutes of the staff members' time. In addition, 14,350 back issues of magazines were obtained from the reserve storage shelves to be used by patrons.

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